

1939.
NEW ZEALAND.

AIR DEPARTMENT

(REPORT ON THE), FOR THE YEAR 1938-39.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

REPORT BY THE HONOURABLE F. JONES, MINISTER IN CHARGE OF THE AIR DEPARTMENT, FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1939.

MR. SPEAKER,—

I have the honour to present to Parliament the report of the Air Department for the year ended 31st March, 1939.

At the commencement, I wish to express the appreciation of the New Zealand Government to Group Captain the Honourable R. A. Cochrane, C.B.E., A.F.C., R.A.F., for the services that he rendered during his attachment of two and a half years to the Royal New Zealand Air Force. Before Group Captain Cochrane left New Zealand, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom agreed to the services of another officer being loaned to the Royal New Zealand Air Force for a further period of two years. Air Ministry in Great Britain selected for this purpose Group Captain H. W. L. Saunders, M.C., D.F.C., M.M., R.A.F., who succeeded to the position of Chief of the Air Staff on the 8th March, 1939. Group Captain Saunders has served with distinction in the Royal Air Force for twenty-two years, and I feel that we are indebted indeed to the Royal Air Force for making available the services of so able an officer to command the Royal New Zealand Air Force during this period of expansion.

The programme submitted by Group Captain Cochrane provided for the expansion of the Air Force by the establishment of two Medium Bomber Squadrons, the establishment of a Flying Training School and a Stores and Repair Base, and the creation of a Territorial Air Force and an Air Force Reserve.

During the year under review, Territorial Squadrons were formed at Auckland and Christchurch and the Wellington Squadron continued at full strength. The Dunedin Squadron is being formed at the end of 1939. The programme has been further expanded to provide for the establishment of a Regular Squadron at Dunedin, and Regular Flights for the Territorial Air Force in Taranaki, Hawke's Bay, and Southland. The Government has also approved of the establishment of a second Flying Training School at Blenheim, capable of an output of 140 pilots a year, and the enlargement of Wigram to provide for the training of an equal number of pilots.

Orders have been placed for large numbers of training aircraft, and delivery has already been received of some "Airspeed Oxfords," "Vincents," "Gordons," and "Baffins." Orders have also been placed for ammunition, bombs, and technical